Testimony in Support of Bill HB 5277: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT THAT PROMOTES ACCESSIBILITY IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES.
March 7, 2022 Public Health Committee Public Hearing

My name is Jay Tulin. I live in Farmington, Connecticut. I am testifying **in support of** proposed HB 5277, **AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT THAT PROMOTES ACCESSIBILITY IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES.**

One fifth of adults living in Connecticut have a disability, and nearly 10% of them have a physical or mobility disability. According to those statistics, almost 78,500 people have mobility disability in our state [1]. People with disabilities are recognized as important consumers of healthcare, yet we continue to experience significant barriers to equitable healthcare. One of those barriers is the **lack of accessible medical diagnostic equipment**, including exam tables, chairs, weight scales, and lifts, that prevent us from receiving complete, and therefore equal, care [2]. Furthermore, in cases when such equipment is available, medical staff are not trained when and how to use it effectively and efficiently. More than a decade of research unequivocally shows that the great majority of physicians and other healthcare providers nationwide do not use accessible equipment for routine care of patients with significant mobility limitations [2-4].

The lack of accessible diagnostic medical equipment **has affected me personally**. I was caregiver for my wife for over 10 years before she passed in 2015 and experienced ...not weighed at doctor's appointments, significantly delayed care due to lack of equipment, inability to get screening or imaging tests, getting transferred manually out of your wheelchair onto an exam table, getting examined by your doctor in your wheelchair, feeling unsafe being transferred out of your wheelchair, etc.] A doctor literally told her not to get on his exam table because she would break the table. In many offices, her oversized wheelchair was not able to get through doors. These all had a tremendous impact on us and her ability to receive adequate care.

Due to the lack of accessible equipment, research demonstrates that people with disabilities experience salient health disparities, such as higher rates of preventable conditions like diabetes and heart disease and lower rates of cancer screenings [5-8]. It thus follows that people with disabilities are diagnosed with cancer at more advanced stages and have higher cancer mortality compared to our non-disabled counterparts [8]. These are clear differences in our health that are **avoidable and unjust**, therefore they are health inequities that must be urgently addressed. Moreover, improving the accessibility of the healthcare infrastructure has the potential to benefit many groups of people, including those with disability, the elderly, and pregnant women, as well as increase the safety of medical staff [2].

The National Council on Disability released a comprehensive report in 2021 in which they demonstrate that the lack of enforceable medical diagnostic equipment standards allows for continued, widespread **discrimination** in healthcare for people with mobility disabilities [2]. The U.S. Access Board issued accessibility standards for diagnostic medical equipment in 2017; however only the Veterans Health Administration has chosen to adopt them [9]. More than 30 years after enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, healthcare remains inaccessible to people with disabilities. If we don't choose to change now, **when will we**? People with disabilities deserve equal

opportunity and dignity in all aspects of their lives, but most importantly in their healthcare. Connecticut should **serve as a role model of health equity and innovation** by adopting the U.S. Access Board accessibility standards,and take the necessary steps towards improving healthcare access and quality for its disabled citizens.

To that end, we urge your support for this most critical legislation.

Thank you.